

Government shuts down, the debt ceiling looms, and Wendy Davis announces in Texas– US blog round up for 28 September – 4 October

Chris Gilson *looks at the best in political blogging from the Beltway and across the States.*

Countdown to shutdown

This week began with the threat of a government shutdown over the budget looming large. On Saturday, the budget battle gives *Via Meadia* opportunity to [look](#) at the relative power of the House of Representatives compared to that of the White House, saying that, at least theoretically, it is closer to public opinion and therefore should be more powerful. As budget negotiations continued through the weekend, *Wonkblog* looked at the Republican demand for a repeal of Obamacare's [medical device tax](#), writing that despite the claims of the medical industry that the tax is killing jobs, the Democrats were not likely to budge on it.

Meanwhile, *The Atlantic* asked if a government shutdown would 'chill [Congressional Republicans out](#)', and lead them to call for more sensible actions. They conclude that this is possible, but unlikely. On Sunday, *No More Mister Nice blog* [writes](#) that the Republicans were not likely to get the blame that they deserve if the government shut down, because the mainstream media still sees the party as 'sane and reasonable'. *Hit & Run* [looks](#) at national polling over Obamacare, finding that while many Americans are against it, they do not wish the government to be shut down over the law, which may lead to the Republicans' tactics becoming more and more unpopular. *The Political Carnival*

runs the [electoral math](#) to argue that the Democrats have won the Presidency and the Senate, and actually gained more of the total votes in the House; meaning that they are effectively ignoring the voice of the people in their budget fight.

Much of this week's discussion was around the role of House Speaker, John Boehner, who is responsible for bringing legislation to the floor of the house. On Monday, with shutdown seeming imminent, *The American Prospect* [argues](#) that despite his frustrations, he could well be Speaker for as long as he wanted to. On the other side, *Doug Ross* writes that Boehner is in fact secretly working to put a '[stake in the heart of the GOP](#)'.

Shutdown

With no budget deal being made by the end of Monday, the shutdown began. On Tuesday morning, *The Monkey Cage* looks at why government shutdowns do not occur in [other countries](#) – mostly for institutional reasons. Also on Tuesday, *Via Meadia* reckons the shutdown will [not be so bad](#), while the *American Prospect* has a good



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[overview](#) of what has led to the shutdown, how it might be resolved, and what it means for both parties. By Wednesday, *Outside the Beltway* predicted that the shutdown would likely [drag on](#) for some time, and may even affect negotiations over the country's debt ceiling, which need to be resolved by 17 October.

The shutdown's affects are far reaching across the country, with more than 2 million federal workers seeing delayed pay checks, and many benefits interrupted, [according](#) to *Wonkblog* (though Congress is [still getting paid](#) writes *Outside the Beltway*). Meanwhile, *The Lonely Conservative* argues that shutdown is actually a 'slimdown', with many services still in place. Similarly, *Hit & Run* finds it odd that some government [websites](#) are up and others are not. The closure of some websites, meaning that important census data and other statistics are not available, is [terrible for transparency](#), writes the *National Journal*. One of the other effects of the shutdown is the closure of America's [national parks](#) – and according to *The Atlantic* this has become one of the foremost illustrations of the government's dysfunction to the average citizen.

Much commentary was given over this week to the Republican and Democratic parties and their progress towards – or away from – reaching an agreement over the budget. *The Atlantic* took a look at why the [fortunes of the GOP](#) might be better after this shutdown than in 1995, when they faced a considerable backlash. *Roll Call* [writes](#) that there are a number of House Republicans who are endorsing a 'clean' Continuing Resolution on the budget (i.e. one that does not defund Obamacare). As the week continues, the House [rejected](#) several bills that would fund individual agencies one-by-one, such as national parks and the Department of Veterans Affairs, according to *United Liberty*. *The White House* dossier [says](#) that Senate Majority Leader, Democrat Harry Reid, is refusing to negotiate because he is keen for the Democrats to retain the Senate in the 2014 elections. Meanwhile, *Hit & Run* says that the Democrats are using the shutdown as [leverage](#) for negotiations over the debt ceiling, which will soon become an important issue.

On Thursday afternoon, gun shots were heard near Capitol Hill and a car chase ensued after a confrontation with a motorist at a White House barrier. *Roll Call* writes that the Capitol Police who have been protecting and serving [are not guaranteed pay checks](#) under the shutdown.

Government, the Beltway, and the debt ceiling

Crooks and Liars writes that Republican Senator Ted Cruz's marathon speech last week in the Senate shows that he may be interested in [running for President in 2016](#).

The Foundry takes a look at the [Farm Bill](#), which combines food stamp and agricultural measures. They argue that the two should be separate in the future in order to make real reforms a possibility. *Roll Call* says that fiscal debates mean that there may be little likelihood that the House will discuss [immigration legislation and reform](#) during this Congress. *The Hill's Congress blog* [argues](#) that while comprehensive immigration reform is essential, in its current form, it may harm competitiveness and jobs.

Perhaps an even more serious issue than the government's budget shutdown is the debt ceiling, which is likely to be reached around October 17th. If Congress does not agree to raise the debt ceiling, then there is the very real possibility that the U.S may default on its debt for the first time in history. With this in mind, *Wonkblog* has six charts that show how the debt ceiling fight is already [hurting the economy](#). Meanwhile, *The American Thinker* says that threats of a default are 'phony', as President Obama could simply prioritise debt repayments from current revenue. *Outside the Beltway* [reports](#) on Thursday that Speaker Boehner will not allow a default over the debt ceiling, though it's hard to see how negotiations might be successful given the positions of both sides.

Foreign policy

This week, *The American Thinker* reflected on President Obama's lack of international leadership and said that the world misses a 'strong America', while *Informed Comment* looked at [declining U.S 'clout' in the Middle East](#). On the other hand, *The Hill's Congress blog* writes that Congress must actually do more to [rein in the President's war powers](#), to ensure that it is involved with the decision-making process over the use of force.

The economy, society, and rollout of Affordable Care

On Tuesday, Obamacare's online insurance exchanges began to launch, despite the government's shutdown, [writes The Atlantic](#). *Daily Kos* reports that demand for Obamacare was so high on Tuesday, that some of the exchange websites were [overwhelmed](#) (though *The Foundry* argues that [enrolment numbers](#) are actually rather low). Meanwhile, *Doug Ross* says that health insurance premiums for those under 30 are set to [rise](#) a great deal under Obamacare for those who are employed. Under Obamacare, some states have been able to opt out of the expansion of Medicaid program. *The American Prospect* [looks](#) at how this affects eligibility, saying that in some conservative states it is very hard to get Medicaid if even if you are very poor.

Via Meadia [reports](#) that a new milestone in U.S. students' debt has now been reached – ten percent of recent college graduates with outstanding loan debts, have defaulted. He argues that this shows that the student debt crisis is continuing to worsen.

Across the States

Northeast

The Atlantic [looks](#) at those in Washington DC who are at the sharp end of the government's shutdown – federal employees who now risk insolvency.

In less than two weeks' time New Jersey goes to the polls in a Senate vacancy election. *Hit & Run* looks at whether or not Democratic candidate Cory Booker might [lose the race](#) with the polls between him and the Republican candidate, Steve Lonegan, closing. Meanwhile, *Save Jersey* reports that Booker (who is currently Mayor of Newark) is ['breaking up'](#) with the media, despite their previous favor for him.

South

On Tuesday, Wendy Davis, a Texas State Senator, announced that she would run for Governor in the state in 2014. *The Monkey Cage* [says](#) that while she is

Texas State Senator Wendy Davis Credit: Alan Kotok (Creative Commons BY)

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unlikely to win, she may well encourage more female candidates to contest elections. Meanwhile, also in Texas, *Burnt Orange Report* [says](#) that George P. Bush's primary opponent for the job of Texas Land Commissioner, Davic Watts, has recently stated that Texas should stop educating the children of undocumented immigrants, a policy the blog calls 'racist and xenophobic'.

The *Okie* [looks](#) at whether or not Oklahoma Senator, Tom Coburn, is a RINO – or Republican in Name Only., because of his opposition to shutting down the government.

The Daily Haymaker says that North Carolina residents are becoming increasingly frustrated with state legislators' plans to [impose tolls on local roads](#).

Tennessee Watchdog [reports](#) that the Facebook page of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park has become a vehicle for partisan frustration as a result of the shutdown.

Midwest

South Dakota War College reports that [Mount Rushmore](#) will not go unmanaged during the shutdown – the state's Governor, Dennis Daugaard has guaranteed it will remain open.

Missouri's *PoliticMo* says that former [Senator Todd Akin](#) may well seek office again in the future.

Via Meadia reports that the Obama administration is moving to send [\\$300million in aid](#) to Detroit's federal agencies, in order to help keep the city running.

SayAnything blog reports that lawmakers in Illinois are not too keen to give agribusiness giant Archer Daniels Midland a [tax break](#) to move within the state, though they do offer them to companies who wish to move from other states. Still in Illinois, *Progress Illinois* looks at the rise of [participatory budgeting](#) in Chicago.

West and Pacific

Crooks & Liars [look](#) at the militiamen who still prowl the Arizona desert for illegal border crossers from Mexico. While the national Minutemen organisation is no longer operating, the new rise of vigilantism is worrying the local authorities.

Via Meadia says that the Californian city of [Vallejo](#) is struggling with \$15million in pension debts as well as other large debts, forcing it to lay off city employees and cut benefits.

Hawaii's *Honolulu Civil Beat* looks at the 2014 race for the state's 1st Congressional District , saying that with five candidates entered, it could be a '[Wild West Shootout](#)', with the winner needing as little as 20 percent of the vote to win.

And finally...

The *National Journal* reveals that '[Carlos Danger](#)', Anthony Weiner's alter-ego got two votes in the recent New York Democratic mayoral primary.

Plunderbund reports that a majority of Americans want the U.S. to [secede from Texas](#).

Under the Dome says that North Carolina's GOP senate candidate will likely receive the nomination in a [casino](#) in 2014.

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Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of USApp– American Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.

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